National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594

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Brief of Accident

Adopted 05/30/2006

MIA04FA100
File No. 19678 | 06/21/2004 | Baker, FL | Aircraft Reg No. N54134 | Time (Local): 13:59 CDT

Make/Model:	Piper / PA-23-250
Engine Make/Model:	Lycoming / IO-540-C4B5
Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Number of Engines:	2
Operating Certificate(s):	None
Type of Flight Operation:	Personal
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation

	Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Crew	2	0	0
Pass	0	0	0

Last Depart. Point:	Marianna, FL
Destination:	Lockhart, TX
Airport Proximity:	Off Airport/Airstrip

Condition of Light:	Day
Weather Info Src:	Weather Observation Facility
Basic Weather:	Visual Conditions
Lowest Ceiling:	None
Visibility:	9.00 SM
Wind Dir/Speed:	270 / 009 Kts
Temperature (°C):	32
Precip/Obscuration:	

Pilot-in-Command Age: 63

Certificate(s)/Rating(s)
Private; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land

Instrument Ratings

Flight Time (Hours)

Total All Aircraft:	261
Last 90 Days:	48
Total Make/Model:	151
Total Instrument Time:	70

The flight crew were on a flight from Marianna, Florida, to Lockhart, Texas when they encountered level 4 thunderstorms at about 8,000 feet altitude, in the vicinity of the Crestview (KCEW) VOR, near Baker, Florida and then they crashed. The wreckage was dispersed over an approximate nineteen-acre area to the left and right of a line drawn between the area where the last radar contact had occurred and the main wreckage site. The main wreckage site, which comprised of the fuselage, was located in a wooded area approximately 6.7 miles west of the Bob Sikes Airport, Crestview, FL. The overall debris path was approximately .4 miles long on a northwest heading and the initial pieces along the path were the vertical fin, rudder, and left aileron. There was no evidence of a post crash fire in the area of the main wreckage site or at any of the secondary locations and no evidence or any patterns like those typically associated with an in-flight fire were identified. Level 4 weather returns had been on either side of the airplane. The airplane was about 3.7 miles due west of KCEW, and had begun a right turn to a course of about 260 degrees. At 1357:40, the airplane was about 3.7 miles southeast of the Crestview VORTAC, at 8,000 feet, and on a course of about 285 degrees. The pilot of the accident airplane requested "a course of one eighty to the left for weather". North Approach replied "is that a one eight zero heading?" The pilot responded "one eight zero," and North Approach approved the request. The airplane was entering the eastern edge of an area of Level 4 returns. At 1358:01, the airplane began a descent and a turn to the left. The last radar target was received at 1358:54, about 53 seconds after initiation of the turn, and all radar returns in the area depicted Level 4 weather activity at the time when air traffic control (ATC) lost communications with the accident airplane. According to the North Approach Radar Controller, who was communicating with the airplane, his workload was moderate on the day of the accident, with about four or five aircraft and that he had been on position for about two to three minutes when the pilot contacted him. The controller stated that he would normally advise a pilot of observed weather returns, but did not do so for the accident airplane or

other pilots in the same general area. He said he did not issue a weather advisory to the accident airplane because in his opinion, "the pilot was seeing everything out there [and] telling [me] what he needed to do". Examination of the airframe, engines and flight controls did not reveal any preaccident failures or malfunction to any airplane systems.

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Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings
1. WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
2. WEATHER CONDITION - THUNDERSTORM
3. (F) IN FLIGHT WEATHER AVOIDANCE ASSISTANCE - NOT RELAYED - ATC PERSONNEL(NON-FAA)
4. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - INADVERTENT - FLIGHTCREW

Occurrence #2: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
5. AIRFRAME - OVERLOAD
6. (C) DESIGN STRESS LIMITS OF AIRCRAFT - EXCEEDED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #3: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
7. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT POSSIBLE

Occurrence #4: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
8. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.
The flight crew's inadvertent flight into thunderstorms resulting in the design limits of the airplane being exceeded, loss of aircraft control and subsequent in-flight breakup. A factor in the accident was the lack of required advisory by ATC about a radar displayed area of weather echoes.